

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Motor Vehicles

- At the end of World War II, Estonian motor vehicles were in a deplorable condition. Wear and tear during the war years had been great and repairs insignificant. A large number of the vehicles were evacuated or destroyed by the German troops. The Soviet troops brought vehicles with them on entering the country, but these did not benefit the civilian traffic to any large extent. Not until about the end of 1950, did the stock of vehicles of the avtobazy, trusts, and ministries begin to be increased in accordance with the organizational plans. Since then, the development has proceeded relatively quickly, so that the traffic volume in 1953 was probably the equivalent of about the top figure of the pre-war years.
- It is now possible to purchase and maintain cars for private use. Trucks may not be privately owned and are sold only to avtobazy, authorities, etc. An increasing number of private persons are purchasing passenger cars, principally the relatively cheap Moskvich and Pobeda. The former, which, depending on the model, costs 8,500 or 9,000 rubles, is particularly in demand. The waiting list in Tallinn, which is the only place of sale in the Estonian SSR for passenger cars, contained in October 1953 about 2,000 names. The Pobeda costs 15,000 or 16,000 rubles, which is the most the average person can afford. In spite of this, the waiting list in October for the Pobeda contained almost 1,000 names. The very much more expensive ZIM, 40,000 rubles, can be obtained without delay.
- The procedure for purchasing and registering is the same for all kinds of motor vehicles. The intent to purchase or to sell a car, for example, is reported to the traffic militia, and a car purchase coupon is issued. This coupon is presented at the place of purchase. A transit number, which is placed on the car until its inspection and registration has been completed, is received from the vehicle inspection. With the transit number and the

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car purchase coupon, the car is presented for inspection at the local office handling vehicle inspections. This office carries out the inspection and issues a technical permit for the car. This permit, together with other documents, is finally presented to the traffic militia which does the registering and issues the car number. Every motor vehicle must be rechecked twice a year..

5. The driver's driving permit, the technical permit, and the receipts for paid taxes and insurance must always be in the car when it is being driven. If the owner of the car is not present, the driver must have a driving permit registered by the traffic militia which applies to the vehicle in question.
6. Gasoline and lubricating oils are sold without restrictions. The price for gasoline at places of public sale is 1.7 rubles per liter, for lubricating oil 2.6 rubles per liter.¹ However, there is extensive clandestine trade involving the fuel and lubricants of the government officials and enterprises. The prices are on the average 50 percent or more above the official prices.

Roads

7. The condition of highways has been continually improved during the past years. With the exception of the highway from Leningrad to Tallinn, there has been no large road construction since the war. The straightening and broadening of roads has been carried out in many places. The division of roads into separate driving lanes, except for the highway mentioned above, has been done only in the case of a few roads going out of Tallinn. The majority of the vehicle bridges which were destroyed during the war are still only temporarily repaired or replaced by wooden constructions. At each bridge there is a road marker stating the largest load permitted. On the average, this load for bridges on the large highways is said to be ten to 20 tons. Greater capacity is rare.
8. The most common surface is gravel. Some of the main roads are permanently or semi-permanently surfaced. In the latter case, the surface consists of a mixture of coarse sand and asphalt tar. In summertime, this surface is unsuited for heavy traffic, since the tar takes on a soft, almost fluid consistency due to the heat. This rapidly gives a rutted and uneven surface.

Railroads

9. The railroads in the Estonian SSR and, especially, the rolling stock are in poor condition. The replacement program is entirely insufficient, with the result that old materiel must be kept in fairly usable condition by means of repeated costly and time-consuming renovations. To combat the wear and reduce the risks of transportation with over-aged materiel, it has been considered necessary to cut down radically the speed of trains.
10. All rail traffic in the Estonian SSR is now moved by steam locomotives, which are fired with shale oil. The diesel locomotives previously used have now been taken out of operation. The scarcity of locomotives has caused the railroads to exceed continually the maximum permitted train weights, and this has further accelerated the deterioration of the locomotives.
11. The classes of passenger cars are the usual ones for the Soviet Union, i.e., cars with hard seats, similar ones with reserved seats, and cars with soft seats which are reserved. Each car in the two last-named categories has a female manager who checks tickets and who, on certain lines, also sells tea, coffee, etc.
12. No extension of the Estonian railroad net has taken place. The lines are largely unchanged and continue to be mainly single-tracked. The railroad bridges which were destroyed during the war have nearly all been repaired or entirely replaced with new construction of a permanent character.

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Mail and Telephone Censorship

13. Postal channels in the Soviet Union are, as far as is known, not subject to any regular censorship. Officially, neither is foreign mail. It is considered certain, however, that all who receive mail from abroad are registered by the police, even though nothing has been heard in recent times of anyone's being called for questioning in this matter. The postal service everywhere is very slow. It takes a letter two days on the average to go from Tallinn to Tartu.
14. Telegrams are sent 24 hours a day to stations located in the Soviet Union, as well as outside the Soviet Union. The sender is required to give his name and address, but no other restrictions exist. The message must be drafted in clear text or in accepted abbreviations.
15. The number of private telephones in the Estonian SSR is again increasing. As far as is known, the only obstruction to obtaining a telephone is the scarcity of apparatus and lines. The party line system is used. Officially, there is no telephone censorship. But in most places, the exchanges are manually operated so that the operators can listen in. At Tallinn, Tartu, and Pärnu, completely automatic exchanges are under construction. For the time being, however, manual service is employed along with the automatic service.

1. Comment: [redacted] gas costs officially about 2.40 rubles per liter, while it can be bought from truck drivers for about 1.50 rubles per liter.

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